

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, July 20. 1695.

Quest. 1. **I** *Am under some trouble and doubt how to be a worthy receiver at the Lords Table, whether I have presumed to go with as much faith and repentance as it pleas'd God to give me, and having learnt out of good Books, (tho I'm sensible that I'm my self simple and ignorant,) the reasons for which 'twas instituted, and the promises annex'd to it. Accordingly I examin'd my self as well as I cou'd, and hope I have been a worthy guest when I've been present at that Sacrament, and resolve to go to it again. But one thing troubles me; I was never confirm'd by the Bishop, and therefore know not whether I han't done amiss in receiving the Sacrament. I went sometime since to a Divine and made my case known, telling him how weak and cold my Devotions generally were: He suspected I was guilty of some great Offence; and when I had assur'd him of the contrary, he thought me under some Indisposition of Body; and advis'd me to go a Philisitan, which was all I cou'd get from him. I am n't sensible I have been guilty of any hainous actual sin, tho I must own I've too much in the mean time, pray how shall I know whether I have true Faith, or Repentance, or am fit for the Sacrament? And if I've any Friends at difference with me, concerning their own welfare, and I know not where they are, to be reconcil'd to 'em, ought this to hinder me from the Sacrament, or will it be sufficient for me heartily to forgive them, and desire God to do the same? One thing more, whether a Master of Family is not concern'd to take care of his servants soul as well as body, and to encourage him to Religion by his advice and Example? Forgive my tediousness, and be pleas'd to answer those questions which are of great concern to me, the resolution whereof will highly oblige your, &c.*

Ans. As the rite of Confirmation is of great use and benefit, and has been very antient in the Church of God, for which reasons the most learned of the foreign Protestants have approv'd and commended the practice of it, so there's no doubt but any person who has an opportunity of receiving it, does very ill in such neglect: And this ought to be perform'd, as the Rubrick directs, as soon as persons are of sufficient age and knowledge to understand "what was promis'd for them in Baptism, that they may with their own mouth and consent openly before the Church ratify and confirm the same. And this, with the publick and solemn prayers of the Church, which are us'd in that office, might be a good means to remove that Coldness and Indevotion which you complain of. Tho perhaps there might have been more of weight and reason in the advice of the Divine you consulted, then you are sensible of, or willing to believe: Melancholly people are too much inclin'd to interest Heaven in their own weaknesses and Follies. If you do well, (shall you not be accepted, seems by the manner of the expression to admit an easy answer in the affirmative, even from the principles of natural Religion. There's no doubt but passion is a sin, and it cost Moses very dear, and ought rather to be fought against and conquer'd then excus'd, but yet still we are men, and allowances will be made for unavoidable Infirmities which are not cherish'd in our minds. Faith and Repentance are to be known like Life, by action, and the livelier the action the stronger the Life: The latter being a true and deep sorrow for sin, evidenc'd by our forsaking it, in the main course of our Lives. The former, a firm assent to all God has reveal'd, with an actual trust in his mercy, on obedience to his Commands: If you have these qualifications you are certainly fit for the Sacrament, habitually fit, without which you can never be actually so; and if you are thus habitually prepar'd, you sin if you absent your self from it, tho any ways unavoidably hinder'd from a more solemn and actual preparation, tho the more serious and solemn that is, the more benefit may you rationally expect from the Celebration. Nor can you want directions how to behave in all parts of that Holy Office, there being so many excellent Books extant

to that purpose, among which the whole duty of man as full and comprehensive as any. If your Friends won't be reconcil'd t'ye, 'tis their own fault and ought not to hinder you from the duty. A master is doubtless oblig'd to take a more particular care of his servants Soul then his Body, tho all wholesome discipline is now almost lost in the world.

Quest. 3. *In the year 92. May 9. at 2 of the Clock, Venus being then in Conjunction with the Moon was seemingly seen in the obscure parts of her Body. What's the meaning of this, since the Moon is a solid body, and the lowest of all the Planets, both according to Copernicus and Ptolomy?*

Ans. Doubtless 'twas one of the fallacies of Optics, occasion'd, we suppose, by the Refraction of the Rays, in their passage through such various mediums, the atmosphere of the Moon, the Earth, and perhaps more; In which cases, in either of these a thicker medium then the other, the object must be seen higher then it really was.

Quest. 4. *A person of no mean Quality has in his youth been guilty of Capital Crimes, of which by Gods grace he has been sensible and repented: His reformation gain'd him such Credit as brought him to a station where he's to give sentence on others for the same Crimes of which he himself had been guilty. Pray what ought he to do?*

Ans. If the story be true, he whose wisdom and abilities have rais'd him to such a station, can't want such mean direction as ours in a case which he himself may without difficulty resolve. 'Tis generally granted by all, that no man is bound to accuse himself, tho every one, in his proper post, to prevent, and punish evil, and even those miscarriages which he himself has been guilty of, if legally brought before him; otherwise a Justice-of-peace who might perhaps have been himself formerly guilty of swearing, and now reform'd and repented, cou'd not lawfully punish another when convicted before him for the same offence, which none will affirm, and is so far from being true that he ought the rather to express his Zeal against it: Tho at the same time an ingenuous man and a good Christian wou'd hardly fail to make some secret reflexions on his own former folly and Gods mercy.

Quest. 5. *In the Old Testament we read in more then one place [that there was nothing in the Ark beside the two Tables of Stone which Moses put there in Horeb] but in the New Testament, in Heb. 9. 4. "That in the Ark of the Covenant there was the Golden Pot that had Manna and Aarons Rod that budded, and the Tables of the Covenant. How do these agree?"*

Ans. The fence will be plain, and the difficulty vanish, if we consider, that 'tis not said, The Manna, Rod, &c. Were in the Ark, in the New Testament any more then in the Old, but the [wherein] ἐν ᾗ does not relate to vessels, the Ark, but to ~~the~~ the Tabernacle, or Holyest of all, mention'd in the preceeding verse; such Transpositions being frequently met with in sacred writings.

Quest. 6. *'Tis said in the 1 Kings 6. and 1st. That Solomons Temple was built, but four-hundred and four-score years after the Children of Israel came out of Egypt; but Josephus tells us 'twas built Five-hundred ninety and two years after their departure thence, whether of the two ought we to believe?*

Ans. 'Tis no great difficulty to answer; surely God, rather then man: Josephus was like other writers, but Holy men, we know spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost. But that this mayn't be thought gratis dictum, there are arguments to be brought from the nature of his writings to suspect him rather then the scriptures, even supposing neither of 'em inspir'd, for that writer is by all allow'd to be the most authentic who is the most impartial, and so on the contrary: Now, tho we grant Josephus a very polite writer, and a noble Historian, yet it can't be deny'd that he's openly partial to his own Countrymen in

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several Instances, less'ning their Faults, as any one may see in the Instances of *Saul*, *Jehoshaphat*, and many others. He commends *Saul* as a *Just*, *valiant*, and *prudent Prince*, and imitable to those who desire to eternize their memory, and *Jehoshaphat's* Character in *1 Kings 22*, *vers 6*, *vers 7*, *vers 8*, *vers 9*, *vers 10*, *vers 11*, *vers 12*, *vers 13*, *vers 14*, *vers 15*, *vers 16*, *vers 17*, *vers 18*, *vers 19*, *vers 20*, *vers 21*, *vers 22*, *vers 23*, *vers 24*, *vers 25*, *vers 26*, *vers 27*, *vers 28*, *vers 29*, *vers 30*, *vers 31*, *vers 32*, *vers 33*, *vers 34*, *vers 35*, *vers 36*, *vers 37*, *vers 38*, *vers 39*, *vers 40*, *vers 41*, *vers 42*, *vers 43*, *vers 44*, *vers 45*, *vers 46*, *vers 47*, *vers 48*, *vers 49*, *vers 50*, *vers 51*, *vers 52*, *vers 53*, *vers 54*, *vers 55*, *vers 56*, *vers 57*, *vers 58*, *vers 59*, *vers 60*, *vers 61*, *vers 62*, *vers 63*, *vers 64*, *vers 65*, *vers 66*, *vers 67*, *vers 68*, *vers 69*, *vers 70*, *vers 71*, *vers 72*, *vers 73*, *vers 74*, *vers 75*, *vers 76*, *vers 77*, *vers 78*, *vers 79*, *vers 80*, *vers 81*, *vers 82*, *vers 83*, *vers 84*, *vers 85*, *vers 86*, *vers 87*, *vers 88*, *vers 89*, *vers 90*, *vers 91*, *vers 92*, *vers 93*, *vers 94*, *vers 95*, *vers 96*, *vers 97*, *vers 98*, *vers 99*, *vers 100*. That he was both *good* and *just*, tho' the Scripture says expressly; that he did evil in the sight of the Lord. Again, he flatters and magnifies his own ancestors above the Truth, and lays hold on some things generally reputed fabulous, which sound to their advantage, as in the *Romantic Loves and Wars of Moses*, which are plainly of a later date than that age, having nothing of the simplicity we find in the transactions of the first times. And in another place, makes *Abraham* a mighty King, and all his servants, so many *Capitans* under him, while he himself is Commander of a vast Army, where-with he might, had he pleas'd, have recover'd *Queen Sara* from the King of Egypt. But he's visibly guilty of yet less tolerable faults than these, for he does in more places than one, lessen the miracles which God wrought for the Jewish Nation, on purpose to make his History more palatable to the unbelieving Heathens, whom he more than once leaves at liberty whether they'd credit 'em or not. Whereas the inspir'd writers, both of Old and New Testament positively assert 'em and require a firm belief to every part of 'em.

All which considerations, we doubt not, will with any impartial person lessen the authority of *Josaphat* where he clothes with sacred scripture, especially when he is but a Transcriber, and that the original, as he himself frequently acknowledges.

Quest. 8. After having been detained many years in France, on the account of religion, without their being able to force me to do any thing against my conscience, providence has at last deliver'd me and brought me into England, where I find many tolerat'd, besides the Religion of the State. I do not find any of them exactly conformable to our Reformed Churches in respect to external worship. And think the Episcopal and Presbyterian Religion, are equally distant from it. Therefore Gentlemen, I desire the favour of you to direct me what to do in respect to my choice, which Church to join with?

Ans. Since neither the Doctrine nor Discipline of the Church of England, is repugnant to the Holy writ, there is no room for any doubt; for where a Man is so happy as not to be sway'd by Prejudice or Education, but at liberty to follow the dictates of his reason, he's certainly oblig'd to join in that worship, if lawful, that is established by the Magistrates of the land; 'tis true, others are allow'd by publick authority, yet it is not because they are as well approved of, but only to prevent greater inconveniences. Tho' indeed it were to be wish'd there were some means found out for a perfect agreement, since dissension and seperation, tho' in indifferent points, are enemies the cause of the Coldness, and sometimes aversion, of pious persons towards one another; and he who only encourages it by uniting himself to them, is as far as capable, guilty of all the Evils which are consequents of it.

Advertisements.

The Undertaker of the *History of Remarkable Providences* (now preparing for the Press, by the Reverend Mr. Turner) having received this Week, from three credible persons living in Southmark, An Extraordinary Collection of late Remarkable Providences, &c. this is to give 'em Notice, that they will all (according to their desire) be inserted in the said Work, under proper Heads. This is also to desire 'em to send those further Accounts they promis'd to send, as well attested as those

they have already sent, and that they would do it with what speed they can. — The first of September next is the longest time allowed for taking in Subscriptions for the said Work. — Proposals and Specimens, giving a full Account of this Work are to be had of *John Duntou*, at the Raven in *Jewen-street*, and of most Booksellers in London and the Country.

The Letter written by Sir *DUNCOMB COLCHESTER*, a little before his Death; containing his REMARKABLE PENITENCE (which Letter was read Publickly, by his Order, in the Parish-Churches of *Michel-Dean* and *Westbury*) is now publish'd, with other are Instances of that Nature. All which are annex't to Mr. *TURNER's* Essay upon the Works of Creation and Providence, publish'd this Week. To which ESSAY is added a SCHEME of the History of Remarkable Providences, now preparing for the Press. As also a large SPECIMEN of that Work. Price bound 2s.

Some Remarkable Passages in the LIFE and DEATH of her Late Majesty, not hitherto made publick, as they were deliver'd in a Funeral Oration; Pronounc'd by Publick Authority, in the Hall of the Most Illustrious States, upon the Day of the Royal Obsequies, March 30 1697. By *FRANCIS SPANHELM J.D.S.* R. F. Chief Professor of the Academy of *Leiden*. — Done into English from the Latin Original. Price 1s.

Mr. *Sault's* Translation of the 2d Volume of *Malbranche's Search after Truth*. To which is added the Life of *Malbranche*.

All four Printed for *John Duntou*, at the Raven in *Jewen-street*. And may also be had of *Edm. Richardson* near the *Poultry-Church*.

Norwich New Stage-Coaches.

Set up by a Joynt Stock, Raised by the Subscription of above Two hundred persons, for the better Accommodation of themselves and others, and for the relief of the poor. Sets out from the Four Swans in *Bishop-gate-street* in London, and from the Kings-Head in the Market-place in *Norwich* every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

These are to give Notice, that *Dr. Clarke*, who has been most famous for curing all diseases of the Eyes, and was Physician and the only sworn Oculist, to King *Charles the second*, and to the late King before whom he restored in an instant the *Lady Bellasis* to perfect sight who was long blind; and brought to sight the 2 Sons of one Mr. *Peter Walter* a Schoolmaster, living near *Mountain-house* in great *Russel-street*, who were born blind with Cataracts, and has restored many blind of the *Gutta Serena*, or black Cataracts, a disease accounted incurable by others, and has an infallible secret for the King's Evil, and dissolving Cataracts, in the beginning without Couching, and Clearing the sight of Dimness, with all those seeming mists, Clouds and false appearances of things flying before the sight, signs of a growing blindness if not in time prevented. And whereas he hath had lately a call out of this Nation, by some eminent persons of Quality who were blind, who being restored to sight by his skill, he is now returned home, and may be advis'd withal as formerly (not only in the Opticks, but as a Legal Physician in all diseases incident to humane Bodies) at his house in *Hatton-Garden*; a Golden Eagle being over the Door.